SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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2010 SFWMD Budget Reflects Continued Commitment to Ecosystem Restoration

$1.5 billion budget dedicates 75 percent to restoration

West Palm Beach, FL — At a public hearing tonight, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board adopted a $1.5 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2010 (*Oct. 1, 2009 – Sept. 30, 2010*). The annual budget funds the agency's flood control and water supply missions as well as its continued progress to restore the South Florida ecosystem, which includes America's Everglades.

"Because of this board's commitment to sound fiscal management, we are able to carry out our core water management responsibilities for the District's 7.5 million residents, and, at the same time, we are able to move forward with the unprecedented opportunity to acquire land to revive the *River of Grass*," said SFWMD Governing Board Chair Eric Buermann.

The approved $1.5 billion budget includes a significant investment in the environment: $536.5 million in Certificate of Participation funding for the proposed initial acquisition of 73,000 acres of land from the United States Sugar Corporation for the purpose of Everglades restoration. As a result of this historic opportunity, a full 75 percent of the FY2010 budget is dedicated to this and to environmental restoration projects benefiting the Everglades, the Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee and coastal watersheds.

The budget also provides for the District to begin work on or complete a host of other key projects to benefit South Florida's environment and residents including:

- $152 million to expand Everglades water treatment areas, creating 11,473 acres of new treatment wetlands south of Lake Okeechobee to improve water quality.
- $34.5 million to begin work on the C-111 Spreader Canal, a project to help restore Florida Bay and Taylor Slough, preserve clean water in Everglades National Park and maintain flood control for eastern communities.
- $25 million for Kissimmee River Restoration land acquisition.
- $42.3 million to design and construct the Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area north of Lake Okeechobee to improve water quality in the lake.

- $11 million for Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Construction to restore habitat and improve water quality in the bay and national park.
- $8 million for the St. Lucie Watershed Protection Plan to improve water quality.
- $3 million to complete dredging of Lake Trafford, helping to clean water flowing to southwest Florida.

The approved FY2010 budget reflects a $65.3 million reduction in property tax revenues, in comparison with the current year. Additionally, the budget is in line with Governor Charlie Crist's direction to emphasize projects that are results-oriented and meet the planned, long-term needs of the region, with a goal to stimulate economic development in local communities.

Prior to tonight's budget-approval action, the FY2010 budget was reviewed and approved by Governor Crist.

The District's annual budget is funded by a combination of ad valorem (*property*) taxes, and by other sources such as federal, state and local revenue; licenses; permit fees; grants; agricultural taxes; investment income and bond proceeds. About 30 percent of the total FY2010 budget comes from property taxes.

The approved tax rates, unchanged from Fiscal Year 2009, represent 62.4 cents per thousand dollars of value in 15 of the District's 16 counties (*the Okeechobee Basin*). For example, a home with a taxable value of $200,000 (*assessed value of $250,000, less the $50,000 homestead exemption*) would see a total District tax bill of $124.80. For Collier County and mainland Monroe County (*the Big Cypress Basin*), the tax rates represent 48.14 cents per thousand dollars. A similar home in this region would see a tax bill of $96.28.

For the 17th consecutive year, the District has been recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) with its Distinguished Budget Presentation Award — the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting. It is the highest honor bestowed by the GFOA. For FY2009, the agency received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, and the budget was recognized as Outstanding as a Communications Device.

More information about the SFWMD budget is available in Governor Charlie Crist's letter of approval.

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About the South Florida Water Management District — Celebrating 60 Years (1949-2009)
The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality,

flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.